

GOD'S YOUTH

Untermeyer, Louis, 1885-1977

I often wish that I had been alive
Ere God grew old, before His eyes were tired
Of the eternal circlings of the sun;
Of the perpetual Springs; the weary years
Forever marching on an unknown quest;
The yawning seasons pacing to and fro,
Like stolid sentinels to guard the earth.
I wish that I had been alive when He
Was still delighted with each casual thing
His mind could fashion, when His soul first thrilled
With childlike pleasure at the blooming sun;
When the first dawn met His enraptured eyes,
And the first prayers of men stirred in His heart.
With what a glow of pride He heard the stars
Rush by Him singing as they bravely leaped
Into the unexplored and endless skies,
Bearing His beauty like a battle-cry.
Or watched the light, obedient to His will,
Spring out of nothingness to answer Him,
Hurling strange suns and planets in its joy
Of fiery freedom from the lifeless dark.
But more than all the splendid heavens He made,
The elements new-tamed, the harnessed worlds;
In spite of these, it must have pleased Him most
To feel Himself branch out, let go, dare all,
Give utterance to His vaguely-formed desires,
And loose a flood of fancies, wild and frank.
Oh those were noble times; those gay attempts,
Those vast and droll experiments that were made
When God was young and blithe and whimsical.
When, from the infinite humor of His heart,
He made the elk with such extravagant horns,
The grotesque monkey-folk, the angel-fish,
That make the ocean's depths a visual heaven;
The animals like plants, the plants like beasts;
The loud, inane hyena, and the great
Impossible giraffe, whose silly head
Threatens the stars, his feet embracing earth.
The paradox of the peacock, whose bright form
Is like a brilliant trumpet, and his voice
A strident squawk, a cackle and a joke.

The ostrich, like a snake tied to a bird,
All out of sense and drawing, wilder far
Than all the mad, fantastic thoughts of men.
The hump-backed camel, like a lump of clay,
Thumbed at for hours, and then thrown aside,
The elephant, with splendid, useless tooth,
And nose and arm and fingers all in one.
The hippopotamus, absurd and bland—
Oh, how God must have laughed when first He saw
These great jests breathe and love and walk about!
And how the heavens must have echoed him...
For greater than His beauty or His wrath
Was God's vast mirth before His back was bent
With Time and all the troubling universe,
Ere He grew dull and weary with creating. . .
Oh, to have been alive and heard that laugh
Thrilling the stars, convulsing all the earth,
While meteors flashed from out His sparkling eyes.
And even the eternal, placid Night
Forgot to lift reproving fingers, smiled
And joined, indulgent, in the merriment...
And, how they sang, and how the hours flew
When God was young and blithe and whimsical.